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CARDIN CHAIRS FIRST-EVER SENATE HEARING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST THE HOMELESS

*"What will history say about us on this issue?
What steps did we take to stop the violence?"*

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, a member of the Senate Judiciary Crime and Drugs Subcommittee, today chaired a hearing exploring hate crimes committed against America's homeless. The hearing, **"Crimes Against America's Homeless: Is the Violence Growing?"** included policy experts, law enforcement professionals and the sister of a Florida homeless man beat to death in 2006. The goal of the session was to help define who the homeless are in the U.S. today, why they may be targets of bias-related crime, explore the lack of statistics related to crimes against the homeless, and discuss the potential impact of the ***Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act, S. 1765***. This was the first time the United States Senate has ever held a hearing on the topic of violence against the homeless population.

"Homeless people are part of America. Every day, we see veterans, fathers, mothers, children, and families who have been forced by circumstances to live on the streets. They are among our Nation's most vulnerable, but too frequently they find themselves the target of violent crime simply because they are homeless. This behavior should not and cannot be tolerated in our society. America's homeless deserve the same respect and dignity that we share sitting here today," **Senator Cardin said**.

"We know that the homeless population in America is growing. One could make an educated guess that these two facts may lead to more victims, but I don't want to guess. I want facts. I hope this hearing will shed some light on this urgent matter and alert the American public to this behavior. The *Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act* will help determine what, if any, resources and tools are needed by local communities and law enforcement to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens from such senseless, bias-motivated violence."

Currently there is no uniform law enforcement reporting on violent acts against homeless persons. While national homeless organizations are tracking these crimes, there is no consistent data on the depth of the problem. Attacks reported range from beatings, death, arson, rape and more. Victims have included men, women, children, veterans and the elderly. A record 43 deaths were reported in 2009. Approximately 3.5 million people a year are likely to experience homelessness in America.

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